

Aunt Helen's Letters

to

Little First Communicants

BY

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AUNT HELEN'S LETTERS TO LITTLE FIRST COMMUNICANTS

LETTERS FROM AUNT HELEN

I.

Our Good Heavenly Father

Dear Boys and Girls:

These letters will probably be more like talks than letters, because I like to imagine that you are all right here where I can see you, and hear what you have to say. So don't be surprised if you find your own selves talking in these letters, too. It wouldn't surprise me if you did some talking right away, because the first thing I am going to do is to ask a question that every one of you can answer.

Who works hard every day so that we can have many nice things—a house to keep out cold and storms, good food to eat, and pretty clothes

to wear? "Oh, that's easy," you say. "It's Father, of course." Yes, indeed. Father loves us and so he does many kind things for us.

Now, another question. Who is the very best and kindest father in all the world? "Mine!" shouts John. "Oh, mine!" says Mary. And "Mine!" and "Mine!" and "Mine!" I can hear. Now, the strange thing about it is that all of you are right. It is your father, John; and yours, Mary; and yours, and yours, and yours, every one of you. But not the father you see here on earth. It is your Heavenly Father, God. He belongs to all of us. He takes care of every one of us. And He is the best and kindest Father in all the world.

He made this whole world, with the sun and moon and stars, trees, rivers, and flowers. The world belongs to Him, but He lets us live here and enjoy it. And, if God didn't help them, even our fathers and mothers couldn't take care of us; for it is really God Who makes the trees grow so that we can build houses, God Who makes the

cotton grow so that we can make clothes, God Who makes the fruit and vegetables grow so that we can have food.

If we just stop to think about it, everything we have comes from our kind Heavenly Father. Can you think of a single thing that we would have if God did not give it to us?

Now, why do you suppose God the Father gives us so many good things? Isn't it because, just like our fathers on earth, He loves us so much? You see, we belong to God just as much as to our fathers on earth. Each one of us is His child. We all belong to God's family. We are even something like God, just as we sometimes look like our fathers or mothers.

"But how can we look like God?" I hear someone say. "You can't see God." Well, now, there is a part of us, too, that cannot be seen. It is the most important part, and it is the part that is like God Himself. Most of you know by this time that what I mean is our souls. God made our souls holy and beautiful, like

Himself; and, unless we spoil them by sin, they please Him very much. He loves us most because of our souls.

Of course, we love our Heavenly Father, too, and we want to show Him that we do. We want to thank Him for all the good things. We want to please Him by doing everything He wants us to do. And, if we have been naughty, we want to tell Him how sorry we are, and ask Him to help us be good. We want Him to help us keep our souls clean and beautiful.

Would you like to know the very best way to show this good Father that we love Him and thank Him and want to please Him—the very best way to ask Him for help?

First, we might see what people used to do a long time ago, and what they do now in different parts of the world. For, you know, God has been the Heavenly Father for years and years and years—more than we can ever count; and He is the Heavenly Father to everyone—

Indians, Eskimos, Japanese, and all the rest. But we had better leave that for next Sunday's letter.

I hope to write you quite a number of these letters; and, since they come to you printed in a paper instead of in an envelope, maybe you would like to keep them in a book. You could paste them in a scrap-book, and make each letter a chapter of your book. You could give each chapter a name, just as they do in real books. For instance, you might name the one for today "Our Good Heavenly Father".

Some of you might want to paste in pictures or make little drawings. That would make a really fine book. Today you might draw a picture of the sun, moon, and stars, and write under it, "God the Father made the sun and moon and stars." It would be easy to find pictures of animals, trees, flowers, rivers, and mountains; and you could write for them, "God made the whole world and everything in it." Maybe you would even be so lucky as to find a picture

of an Eskimo or a Chinese, and then you could write, "God is the Heavenly Father to everybody."

Or maybe you have some other ideas. Aunt Helen would be glad to hear of them. Would you like to write her a letter and tell her about your book?

LETTERS FROM AUNT HELEN

II.

How Others Thanked Our Heavenly Father

Dear Boys and Girls:

Do you remember what we were talking about Last Sunday? It was about our good Heavenly Father, God. We were wondering what would be the very best way to show this good Father that we love Him and thank Him and want to please Him, and the very best way to ask Him for help.

We thought we might see what people used to do a long time ago, and what they do now in different parts of the world. So then, today, let us go away back to the beginning of the world.

You know about the very first man and woman who lived on the earth. They were Adam and Eve, and they lived in the beautiful garden

of Paradise until they disobeyed God and had to be shut out.

Adam and Eve had a boy named Cain and one named Abel. Cain was a farmer. Every spring he ploughed the ground and planted seed, and late in the summer he gathered fruit and vegetables, wheat and corn. The seed that he planted was hard and dead-looking; but God had hidden life in it, and God had stored away food for it in the ground, so that when the rain fell and the sun shone, these hard little dead-looking seeds grew up into big live green plants.

Cain was so thankful to God for making his plants grow that he used to make gifts of them to God. He would lay his very first bunch of grapes, his very first ear of corn—the first of all his crops—on a table, or altar, as a gift to God. Don't you think God was pleased that Cain thought of Him in this way?

Cain's brother, Abel, was a shepherd—that is, he herded sheep. He took them out to eat grass by day

and kept them safe by night. Abel would bring his little baby sheep to the altar as a gift to God. He wanted to thank God for making the new little lambs, and for making the grass grow so they would have something to eat.

Do you know the story of Noah and the ark? If you do, then you know that God once sent a great flood upon the earth, but that He told Noah how to save his family and the animals by building a great boat, or ark. You know, too, how it rained and rained, for forty days and nights, so that all the people, animals and plants were drowned; all except Noah and his family and the animals he had taken into the ark. After the water had gone down and they could come out of the ark, what do you suppose was the first thing Noah did? He built an altar and offered up to God some of the birds and animals from the ark. This was to give thanks to the Heavenly Father, Who had taken such good care of them. Noah hoped that God would be pleased, and that He

would always take care of them in times of danger.

Cain and Abel and Noah lived a long time ago—thousands of years ago—and in a country far away from us. But the next story is about something that happened not long ago, and right in our own country. An Indian was walking in the woods one day, when he heard a loud, roaring noise, like thunder. When he got closer, he found that the thundering noise did not come from the sky, but from a big, fast river falling over some high rocks. What he saw was the great Niagara Falls. He had never seen anything so big and strong and beautiful before, and he thought that surely the Great Spirit (the Indian name for God) must live in that great waterfall. So he took off his shiny beads and his bright-colored feathers—his very favorite things—and threw them into the waterfall as an offering to God.

So we see that, for a long, long time, and in many places, people have been offering gifts to God. That's just what we want to do, too.

And, of course, we want it to be the very finest thing we can get. What do you think it should be? What will please our Heavenly Father best? What will show Him that we thank Him for all the good things He has done for us, that we want to please Him always, and that we are sorry for the naughty things we have done to hurt Him?

This is something to think about until next Sunday. Did you cut out last Sunday's letter and paste it in a scrap-book? And did you draw a little picture or paste in some? This week you can name the chapter "How Other People Thank the Heavenly Father". You can draw a picture of an altar (something like a table) and draw or paste pictures of fruit, vegetables, and grain on it. Maybe you can find a picture of Noah and the ark and animals, or a lamb, such as Abel offered. Or some Indian beads and feathers, or a waterfall. Of course, you must write something under the picture to show what it is about, just as we see in the papers and magazines.

LETTERS FROM AUNT HELEN

III.

What Pleases God the Father Best

Dear Boys and Girls:

Have you been thinking since last Sunday of what we could offer to our good Heavenly Father? Of what we could give Him to show that we love Him and want to please Him always? To show that we thank Him for all the good things He has done for us and that we are sorry for all the bad things we have done to hurt Him?

And could you decide what would be the nicest gift,—the perfect offering? I wish we were all together so I could hear all the different things you have thought of. But, since that cannot be, suppose we all think what the Heavenly Father loves best in all the world, won't we? And, if we think hard, we will see that it must be **HIS OWN SON, JESUS CHRIST!**

It is true that we are all children of God, and, because of our souls, something like God. But Jesus is the only real and true Son of God. For Jesus is God, too, and He is as good and beautiful in every way as God the Father. So, of course, God the Father loves Jesus more than anything else in the world.

Now we know what pleases God the Father most, but how can we give it to Him? How can we give Him His own Son, Jesus? We would have to have Jesus for our own, first, wouldn't we? And that means that God the Father would have to give His Son to us.

And that is exactly what he did! Do you know when this wonderful thing happened? If you think about the Christmas story, maybe you can tell. For, on that first Christmas day, God sent His Son, Jesus, down from Heaven to live with us as a little baby, born in a stable. That was the first, and the very best, Christmas present, when God gave His Son to us.

Many years before, God had promised this wonderful gift. He made the promise to Adam and Eve when they were so sorry because they had disobeyed Him, and had to be shut out of the beautiful garden of Paradise.

You see, it was a very dreadful thing to disobey God. Adam and Eve belonged to God, and they should have done everything He wanted them to. And; if they did not want to live as God told them, they really had no right to live at all, did they? God had made them, had given them life; and, if they disobeyed Him, He had the right to take away their life—to make them die.

But when God the Father saw how sorry Adam and Eve were, He showed mercy to them. He promised them He would send His own Son, Jesus, down on earth to “make up” for their dreadful sin. He promised that Jesus (Who is God, too, like His Heavenly Father) would become man, and that He would die instead of Adam and Eve. He would die on

the cross to "make up" for their sin, and for all the bad things that people have been doing since Adam and Eve started sin in the world.

"I know," you say, "that Jesus died on the cross to 'make up' for our sins. But then He went back to Heaven to live with His Heavenly Father. He is not with us any more."

Oh, but He *is* still with us—everywhere and every day! Before Jesus went back to Heaven, He did a wonderful thing. He left us His own Self so that He would always be near to help us, and so that we could always offer Him to the Heavenly Father as a most precious and pleasing gift.

Are you saving these letters and making a book with them? It will be nice for you to look at or to show to your little brothers and sisters. Or it would make a fine gift for your father or mother.

This letter will make Chapter III, and you can name it "What Pleases God the Father Best", or something

like that. There ought to be lots of pictures you could use to decorate it. Under a picture of Jesus you could write, "God the Father loves His Son, Jesus, better than anything else in the world." And, under a picture of the Baby Jesus, you could say, "God the Father gave His Son, Jesus, to us on the first Christmas day". And every one of you really ought to have a picture of Jesus on the cross and say, "Jesus offered His life to the Heavenly Father to make up for our sins."

LETTERS FROM AUNT HELEN

IV.

Jesus Is Still With Us

Dear Boys and Girls:

You already know what we are going to talk about this time, don't you? Remember, I told you last Sunday it was such a wonderful thing that we had better leave it for a whole new letter?

But maybe some of you are just starting to read Aunt Helen's letters, and didn't see the one last Sunday. So I will say again, for you, what this wonderful thing is. It is that our dear Lord Jesus is still here on earth with us! It is true that He went back to Heaven to be with His Heavenly Father, but, before He went, He left us Himself, so that He would always be near whenever we want Him to help us, and whenever we want to offer Him to the Heavenly Father as a most precious and pleasing gift. Such a wonderful

thing, I said, that only God could do it, or even think of it.

This is how He did it. Just before Jesus carried His cross and died on it for our sins, He called twelve of His best friends, the Apostles, to Him. He ate supper with them, and they had bread to eat and wine to drink. He took some of the bread and blessed it. Then He gave it to the Apostles, saying, "This is My Body". He blessed the wine, too, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My Blood".

Now it still looked like bread and wine to the Apostles, but they knew Jesus was God and could do anything He wanted to. They knew, too, that Jesus would not tell them a lie, so they were sure that, after Jesus had blessed the bread and wine, it was really His Body and Blood, even though they couldn't understand how this was done. Just as we all know that the food we eat turns into the flesh and blood of our bodies, even though we can't understand how it all happens.

Then Jesus told the Apostles

something more. He told them that He would give them the power to do what He had just done—to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. And He told them that He wanted them to keep on doing this until the end of the world.

Of course, the Apostles died; but there are new men to take their places. We still have Apostles to-day, only now we don't call them Apostles; we call them priests. All the priests have the power to bless bread and wine and change it into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, just as Jesus did at the Last Supper.

Do you know when the priest does this wonderful thing? It is during Mass, at the time called the Consecration. "Consecration" is a new word for some of you and a rather big one; but it will be easy for you if you remember that it sounds something like "sacred", which means "holy", and that it is during the Consecration that the bread and wine become the sacred, or holy, Body and Blood of Jesus,

If you are cutting out these letters every week, this one will be Chapter IV in your book. I would name it "Jesus Is Still With Us", but maybe you can think of a better name. There are so many pictures of the "Last Supper" that I'm sure you can find one to decorate your book. Then, too, you can draw a picture of the bread that Jesus and the Apostles ate, and write under it, "At the Last Supper, Jesus blessed the bread and said, 'This is My Body'." Then draw a picture of a cup of wine, and write—but I'm sure you will know what to write.

LETTERS FROM AUNT HELEN

V

Seeing God

Dear Boys and Girls:

Last week we talked about the Last Supper and a little about the Mass. You know, the Last Supper was really the first Mass. At Mass, the priest does the same thing that Jesus did at the Last Supper. By the power of God he changes bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, just as Jesus did.

He does this because Jesus wants Him to. You know, Jesus asked the Apostles to keep on doing this until the end of the world. The priests take the place of the Apostles, and so they bless bread and wine once a day and, by the power of God, change it into the Body and Blood of Jesus.

Remember what we call the part of Mass in which this happens?

The Mass is sometimes quite long, but the Consecration is always about

in the middle. There are many prayers before it, to help us get ready for the wonderful event. We can always tell just when it comes, because the priest says the prayers very quietly at the altar, the music stops, and the altar-boy gives the bell a little tap to let us know that the priest is ready to say the wonderful—I almost said “magic”—words. He says just what Jesus said at the Last Supper: “This is My Body”, and “This is my Blood”. See if you can find these words in your prayer-book.

If you watch the priest closely, you will see that he kneels down on one knee, lifts the Body of Jesus up high, like Jesus on the cross, and then kneels down again. The altar-boy rings the bell three times, so that, if you are far away in the church and cannot see, you will still know that the wonderful time has come. After a little, while everything is still very quiet, you will see the priest kneel again on one knee. Then he will hold the Blood of Jesus up high, toward God the Father, and kneel down

again. (The altar-boy rings the bell three times again.)

When the priest holds up the Body of Jesus to offer It to God the Father, we should whisper, "My Lord and My God!" For it is really Jesus Who is there, even if we can't see anything but the round white bread.

And, when he holds up the gold cup of the Blood of Jesus—more precious than gold—we can think of how Jesus shed His Blood for us on the cross, and we can say to God the Father: "Dear Heavenly Father, see, here is Your beloved Son, Jesus. He never did anything wrong Himself—it is for *our* sins that He died on the cross. He wants to make up for our sins. He is asking You to forgive us. Please think of how He loves You, and do not think of our sins, that hurt You so much. We will try hard not to sin again. You are so good that we want always to please You."

Do you know what I would like to name this letter, or chapter? I would like to call it "Seeing God". Can you tell why?

Nowadays, we say we "go to Mass"; but a long time ago, people used to say they were going to "see God".

Indeed, some of the saints have really seen Jesus as He appeared on earth, when they looked up at the "Holy Bread" at the Consecration. Maybe you can find someone to tell you the whole story, and then you can write it in your book.

Even if you can't have the story, you can all draw a picture of the Host and the Chalice. These are the names we usually give to the bread and wine that the priest blesses and changes into the Body and Blood of Jesus. Ask some older person to help you with this.

I would draw a cross or, paste a picture of a crucifix, too, by the Host and Chalice, because it was on the cross that Jesus offered His Body and Blood to God the Father.

LETTERS FROM AUNT HELEN

VI

Jesus Comes to Visit Us

Dear Boys and Girls:

Was it last Sunday that I said the Last Supper was really the first Mass? At the Last Supper, Jesus changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood. In the Mass, at the Consecration, the priest, too, changes bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus.

Now Jesus did something else at the Last Supper. After He had changed the bread into His sacred Body, He gave it to the Apostles and said, "Take ye and eat". And, after He had changed the wine into His Sacred Blood, He said, "Drink ye all of this."

In the Mass, the same thing happens. After the priest has changed the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus, He receives it and gives it to us as food. This is at an-

other part of the Mass, called Communion. The altar-boy rings the bell again—three times—for this is also a very important part of the Mass.

Just think what happens then! Jesus comes to visit us! That is, if we love Him, and want Him, and have cleaned our souls of sin so that they are fit for Him to visit.

In Holy Communion, we take Jesus into our bodies. He is our Heavenly Food. Sometimes we say He is the Bread of Life. You know that our bodies would starve if we gave them no food. And our souls would die, too, little by little, if we did not give them this Heavenly Food.

Our souls are like God, we said, and He loves us most because of our souls. So we don't want them to die, surely! Or even to grow weak, which is just what they will do if we do not give them this Heavenly Food.

How strong this wonderful (I almost said "magic" again) food makes our souls! You know that our souls please God only if they are holy and beautiful and not stained with sin.

But you know, too, how hard it is sometimes to keep from doing the naughty things that stain our souls. There is quite a fight between the wrong and the right, sometimes, isn't there? But, if we have received Jesus in Holy Communion, He will make us strong so that we can always do the right thing, no matter how hard it may be.

He will always help us because He is our Friend. Our very best Friend, really, isn't He?

Whenever your little friends and playmates come to visit you, you say, "Come back again", don't you? Now, shouldn't you say this to your very best Friend, Jesus?

He wants to come to us all. He said so at the Last Supper. "This is My Body; take ye and eat." "This is My Blood; drink ye all of this." And at another time, He said, "My *delight* is to be with the children of men."

Jesus is knocking at our door. He wants to come in and live in our souls. Surely we will not keep the door shut! Surely we will not let them be-

come stained with sin so that they will not be fit for Him to visit! No. We will keep our souls clean and bright, and we will ask Jesus to come and visit, by going to the altar to receive Him in Holy Communion.

What shall we name this letter? Suppose I leave that—and the pictures—all to you this time, and suppose you write and tell me what you decide! I will know, though, that, if you can possibly get it, you will all have one of the pictures of Jesus blessing little children—where it says, “Let the little children come unto Me.”

If you liked Aunt Helen's letters, she will write you some more, especially if you tell her what you would like to talk about.

I just thought of a lovely thing you could do with your book when it is all finished. You could give it to Mother and Father, and write a little page just for them, something like this:

“Dear Mother and Father:

“Every time I go to Mass, I see God. I see Him at the Consecra-

tion, when the priest holds up the Body and Blood of Jesus. The priest offers Jesus up to the Heavenly Father, and Jesus talks to Him for us. I will ask Jesus to help me thank God the Father because He has given me so many good things, especially a father and mother. I will ask the Heavenly Father to help you in all your troubles. And, when Jesus comes to visit us in Holy Communion, I will ask Him to come into my soul. He will help me to be good. I know that will please you, and that it will make God glad to have me for His child."

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